



## News From Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis 32<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District of California

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### **SOLIS, CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION PAY TRIBUTE TO MIGUEL CONTRERAS AS CHAMPION OF WORKING FAMILIES**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.-**Today, Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis (CA-32), submitted a *Congressional Record* Statement in honor of Miguel Contreras proclaiming him a champion of working families. Other members of the California Democratic Congressional Delegation also signed on to the following *Congressional Record* circulated by Congresswoman Solis:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise today, along with my colleagues from California, Ms. Pelosi, Mr. George Miller, Mr. Baca, Mr. Becerra, Mr. Berman, Ms. Capps, Mr. Cardoza, Mr. Costa, Ms. Susan Davis, Ms. Eshoo, Mr. Farr, Mr. Filner, Ms. Harman, Mr. Honda, Mr. Lantos, Ms. Lee, Mr. Lofgren, Ms. Matsui, Ms. Millender-McDonald, Ms. Napolitano, Ms. Roybal-Allard, Ms. Linda Sanchez, Ms. Loretta Sanchez, Mr. Schiff, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Stark, Ms. Tauscher, Mr. Thompson, Ms. Waters, Ms. Watson, Mr. Waxman and Ms. Woolsey, to pay tribute to Miguel Contreras, who died unexpectedly on Friday, May 6, 2005. As Executive-Secretary Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and a Vice President of the California Labor Federation, Miguel was a friend to many of us in Congress from California. More importantly, he was a staunch champion for working families in Los Angeles and throughout the country whose leadership brought much needed vigor to our nation’s labor movement.

“As the son of migrant farmworkers, Miguel grew up in Dinuba, California, where he worked in the Central Valley’s fields from the age of five alongside his parents and six brothers. Following his parents’ example, Miguel became active in the labor movement, where his skills were recognized by the legendary Cesar Chavez, who hired him as a union representative for the United Farm Workers. For six years, Miguel worked under Chavez, gaining critical leadership, strategic, and political skills at the helm of one of our nation’s greatest civil rights heroes.

“Miguel later joined the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees’ (HERE) Union Local 2 in San Francisco, where his coordination of a citywide major hotel walkout led to the biggest wage and benefit increases in history for the 14,000 member local union. His efforts spread beyond California to hotel organizing efforts in Nevada and New York.

“Following a three year stint as political director of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Miguel was elected Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Federation in 1996. As head of the Federation, Miguel oversaw the operation of 350 local unions and more than 800,000 union members. Under his leadership, the Federation became a powerful voice for working families throughout Los Angeles, leading successful organizing and wage improvement campaigns for janitors, bus drivers, mechanics, trauma center workers, and thousands of other workers.

“As the first Latino elected to head Los Angeles County’s powerful labor organization, Miguel opened the door for thousands of Latino and immigrant workers throughout Southern California to the union movement and better wages and health benefits. In doing so, he transformed the face of not only the labor movement in Los Angeles, but of local, city, and state elected officials, and, inevitably, the city and state as well.

“The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor has become a model for union organizations across the nation. At a time when union membership is waning in other areas of the country, it grew quickly in Los Angeles County under Miguel’s leadership. The superior labor organization he developed in Los Angeles and its successes are just a part of Miguel’s enduring legacy to those most in need in our society.

“As Members of the California Congressional delegation, we honor Miguel as champion for working families. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife, Maria Elena Durazo, and his sons Michael and Mario, during this difficult time.

“Miguel Contreras’ passing is not only a tremendous loss for working families in Southern California, but also throughout the nation. His tremendous strategic skills and dedicated passion to improving the lives of others are rare and will be missed sorely by thousands of working men and women he called his brothers and sisters.”

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